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A MISTAKE, AND ITS RESULTS.

IN THREE CHAPTERS—CHAP. I.

It seems a long time ago since the journey from Cork to Dublin took two days. There are those living, I suppose, who remember when it was a matter of three or four, but I speak of a more modern period, albeit the railway from Dublin to Kingstown was then the only one in Ireland. At this time, Bianconi's large four-horse cars formed the grand trunk from the south to the metropolis; while smaller vehicles, meeting the principal conveyance at different points, acted as branch-lines to the main one. From one of these latter I took the large car at Mitchelstown, on an intensely cold day, the last or last but one of October, 18—. I was going to Dublin for my Michaelmas Term examinations in Trinity College; and having idled the whole summer, I felt some apprehension about the result of the ordeal through which I had to pass, and wondered much whether I should come back 'plucked.' The dark leaden sky, and the cutting north-east wind, were in dreary keeping with the sombre thoughts that troubled me. I occupied the box-seat, an honour that was dearly purchased by facing the blast; and Stapleton the driver predicted snow (early in the season as it was) before we reached Kilkenny, our destination for that night. We delayed for half an hour, I remember, at Clonmel about two o'clock; there was a good deal of excitement in the town, from the expectation of a special commission for the trial of prisoners connected with two terrible agrarian murders of recent occurrence in the South Riding of Tipperary. As we journeyed on, the driver entertained me with details of different outrages that he knew of, pointing out, now and again, the scenes where they took place, and winding up with the ominous announcement: 'Mark my words for it, but the Ribbon boys will give them enough to do this winter; they won't let much grass grow under the peelers' feet anyways.'

I forget now how many stages we had travelled from Clonmel when we stopped to change horses at a small public-house on the roadside; something

was amiss with the shoe of one of the horses, and a sharp altercation ensued between the driver and the stable-boy on the subject, that ended with an injunction to 'hurry off like blazes' to a neighbouring forge for the smith to remedy the defect. As I foresaw that there would be some delay, I proposed to one or two of my travelling companions to join me in a run to warm our feet until the car overtook us. As they declined, I set off alone, calling back to Stapleton, when I was a few paces on, to know if there were any turns upon the road.

'No, sir,' he replied; and then added: 'keep to the left—keep to the left, and you'll be all right.'

Laughing at this unintentional pun, and repeating the old couplet to myself:

If you go to the left, you'll be sure to go right;
If you go to the right, you'll go wrong—

I dashed on at full speed, and very soon noticing a road that branched off at right angles to the main one, I concluded that this was the reason of his direction. I was at all times a very swift runner, while the intense cold of the evening braced my energies still more. 'By Jove!' I exclaimed, 'I'll astonish them a bit: old Jehu will think I'm lost before he picks me up;' and the expectation of gaining credit by my prowess as a walker, accelerated my speed to unusual rapidity. The day, I have already remarked, was specially gloomy, and the evening shadows were now darkening into night with more than ordinary swiftness. Once I was for a moment at fault about the road, as I came upon a slight divergence from the direct line, but recalling Stapleton's words—'keep to the left'—I followed that direction, and trudged on upon this unknown way into the thickly-gathering darkness. At last I began to wonder why the car did not come up; but concluding that the smith's operations caused the delay, I still went forward until the road became unusually rough and broken; and then, as far as the dim light allowed, I observed that the vegetation at the sides encroached far more than I had ever known upon a mail-coach road. 'Oh, 'tis impossible that I can have gone astray!'

I exclaimed, not allowing the unpleasant thought to intrude; and I still continued my course, though at a more doubtful pace, until I suddenly halted on perceiving that the narrowing line of roadway appeared to cease altogether, and I found myself actually walking on moist boggy ground. 'Where on earth am I?' I cried in consternation, peering round through the darkness. As far as I could descry, I seemed to have wandered into some moor or commonage that stretched along the base of a steep acclivity; not a sound could I hear on any side, but the moaning sigh of the wind as it swept by with penetrating bitterness, and once the wild cry of some bird, startled from its rest by my approach. I made two or three efforts, but they proved ineffectual, to retrace my steps, and each time I became more bewildered, stumbling over rocky projections or roots of trees, and occasionally sinking ankle-deep into wet miry ground. 'God help me!' I exclaimed at last in utter despair, and almost bursting into tears of vexation. 'I'll have to wander about here all night, and perish with cold before morning.' Another desperate effort to reach some pathway met with a like issue, save that by, I suppose, some consequent change of position, a bright light suddenly broke upon me, so bright and so close, that I was considerably startled at the unexpected appearance.

I thought of the Will-o'-the-wisp, and fancied, from the evident nature of the ground, that it might be the meteor of the marsh; but as I moved cautiously forward, I saw that it came through the open door of a cabin, and a closer access shewed me why I had not sooner detected it. The tenement before me was curiously constructed; the ground on three sides rose at a considerable elevation, and it seemed as if a deep cavernous recess had been formed in the yielding soil, and in it this rude habitation erected. I walked straight to the door, but saw no one within or immediately near the cabin; the light came from a large peat-fire, piled upon a hearthstone at one side of the room; and so bright was the illumination, that it not only disclosed every object inside, but enabled me to notice distinctly the nature and peculiarity of the building without. I hesitated to enter, notwithstanding the tempting look of the fire, where there was no one to invite me. I called loudly once or twice, but no reply came; and at length I passed within the doorway, and proceeded without ceremony to warm my chilled limbs at the welcome blaze. 'Some one is sure to be here in two or three minutes,' I thought; 'this fire has been freshly made up.' The room where I stood seemed to be the only one the place could boast of, and wretched enough it was: an old bedstead, with a tattered curtain, occupied one corner; beside the fire rose a huge pile of dried sticks flung loosely together, that nearly reached to the ceiling; a large log of timber against the wall at the side opposite the fire, formed a kind of rude seat; while a stool or two, and an old rickety table, made up the remainder of the furniture. When some short time elapsed, I began to feel a little nervous at the position in which I found myself; apart from the vexation I experienced at having gone astray, and the difficulty I might find in reaching Dublin in time for my college duties, I remembered the troubled state of the country; and this lonely spot, at the foot of some mountain, was no desirable place to be caught in at night, alone and unarmed.

CHAPTER II.

I was deliberating whether I had better make another attempt to find my way, or stay until some one came, when the dead silence was broken by the noise of evidently more than one person approaching. As the parties came nearer, I could discern that some conflict or struggle was going on; at first, there were no voices, but a peculiar panting sound, such as accompanies the movement of people where effort is met by resistance, until at length, in a low, deep voice, like the growl of a mastiff, the words reached me: 'Curse you, will you come on? I'll knock you on the head, if you don't.' The ominous tone in which this brief sentence was uttered, evidently close to the doorway, made me bound back from the glare of the fire, and without a moment's thought, I glided in behind the pile of brushwood before referred to, between which and the end-wall of the cabin a narrow passage afforded bare space for concealment. I had scarcely effected my purpose, when three men entered the apartment, or rather two dragged in another between them. 'Shut the door, Bill,' gasped the elder of the two, for he was out of breath, and perspiring profusely. The younger man addressed as Bill complied, and then drew a large iron bar across the closed entrance. The screen behind which I was ensconced was so loosely constructed that I could see through the interstices all that went forward, while I devoutly hoped that it would prove sufficient to hide me from observation. The third individual of the party, who seemed to have been brought in as a prisoner, was a mere stripling, did not look more than twenty, and had, I could notice by the fire-light, an expression of extreme alarm on his pale young face as he looked upon his captors. 'There!' cried the elder man, giving him a violent push backwards, and shaking his closed fist at him, 'you are coht at last, you miserable spalpeen, you! I had my eye upon you when you little thought it. I suspected you even the very night you took the oath; and to-night I tracked you down to the police barrack, and saw what you were after; but as there's a heaven above us, it's the last chance you'll ever get of doing the like!'

'I tell you, Barney, on my solemn oath,' began the young man, in a voice that trembled with agitation; but before he could utter another word, a quick, sharp knocking at the door interrupted him, and seemed to startle the whole party. The two men looked inquiringly at each other for a moment. 'Oh!' exclaimed the younger, who had been addressed as Bill, 'tis Gran, I suppose;' and walking forward, he admitted, after a moment's parley, an old gray-haired woman, with a cloak thrown over her head. 'An' where were you now, at this hour of the evening?' asked Barney, accompanying the inquiry with an oath.

'An' where was I, is that it? Afther them divils of goats there, that were wandhering off a good two mile and more from here; and near enough I was, bad-luck to them! tumbling in the dark into the Wizard's Hole above there in the bog; and 'tis a night, glory be to God! that would shiver the heart out iv your body.—But what's along here?' asked the old woman suddenly. 'What's the matter? Isn't this Ned Sweeny?'

'Matter enough!' returned Barney gruffly. 'He only wanted to get the rope round my neck and

Bill's here; he was turnin' informer on our hands; but never you fear; we'll stop that work. Here, Bill, lend a hand, will you,' and the speaker strode across the room with some strong cord in his hand, that he had drawn from his pocket. The poor youth uttered a wild cry of terror that rung through the whole place, as the two men seized him.

'I tell you, Barney,' he cried imploringly, 'I wasn't going to tell a word to mortal soul; all I wanted with Connors was to ask him about the rabbits down at the colonel's.'

'Whisht your jabber, you thin-skinned varmint, you. Keep your breath to cool your porridge. I wouldn't believe ye, if ye kissed all the books in the barony. Ye'd have told that same foxy cub of a peeler of our tramp to-night, if I didn't stop your tongue. Them was the rabbits at the colonel's ye were after. Ha! you'll never see daylight again, plase providence. Here, Bill, tie that knot tight, will ye.'

I could see from the spot where I was sheltered, that after a brief and feeble struggle, their unfortunate victim had been bound hand and foot, and was then left sitting upon the log of timber before mentioned. I was at first so absorbed in interest at what I witnessed, as to be half unconscious of my own peril, but a terrible sense of it soon recurred. That I had most unfortunately fallen upon a party of desperate ruffians, there was no doubt, nor could I entertain a hope of escaping speedy death, if I were detected, and that might be expected every moment. A cold shudder crept through my whole frame as I realised the horrible position I was in. I was afraid, too, to stir, as an unguarded movement might so disturb the frail screen in front as at once to betray me; and the narrow passage between it and the wall scarcely afforded standing room. Bitterly did I curse the mad stupidity that led me into such danger; nor did many minutes elapse before a fresh accession of alarm was caused by the anticipation of instant discovery. Barney and Bill, as I had heard them named, after binding their prisoner, returned to the fire, where the old woman had remained, holding her long skinny hands over the blaze, and apparently not much interested, one way or the other, in the operations that were going on.

'I say,' asked Bill, as he seated himself on a stool, 'will you bring him before Captain Rock, and the rest of the boys to-morrow night, and have him tried reg'lar?'

'Faith, I'll do no such thing,' replied the other; 'I'll be judge, jury, and all myself. I caught him in the act, and that's enough. Death and no mercy to the spy and the informer—they's the laws among the Ribbon boys. Besides, I don't like a bone in the young vagabond's skin; and the ruffian muttered something that I could not hear.'

'May be,' responded the other in a low tone, 'you may get into trouble.'

'No fear, Bill, my boy. I dunno,' he continued, 'either, but it may be best to finish him at once. Faith, here goes.' As he spoke, the man lifted a square stone somewhere near the hearth, and from a concealed receptacle he drew out what appeared to me, as well as I could see it, to be a large pistol; from the same opening, he took the other appliances, and proceeded deliberately to load the weapon. The poor bound creature leaped up with a desperate effort, as he noticed those fearful preparations, but fell back again, helplessly upon the seat.

'Oh, for the love of God, Barney, don't murder me!' he cried in a hoarse, half-choking voice. 'Speak to him, Nelly, speak to him!' he continued appealingly to the old woman. None of them took the least notice of his entreaties, the old woman merely shook her head, and continued gazing into the fire. I felt tingling from head to foot with horror at the prospect of witnessing this cold-blooded murder, and was inclined, on the first impulse, to rush out at all hazards, and interfere.

'I say, Barney,' again exclaimed Bill, 'why waste powder and shot on the likes of him; 'tisn't so much we have to spare. Tell you what we'll do: as we go down to meet the boys on the way to the colonel's to-night, pitch him into the Wizard's Hole; and, mind me, he'll not come up again to tell tales.'

'You're right, Bill—the very thing,' returned Barney, laying down his pistol. 'I remember the last chap as we tucked into the soft sheets there; laws! what a splash he made as the black slush closed over him; it made me almost shiver.'

A deep moan of agony, that broke from the wretched young man, told the effect that this fresh arrangement had upon him.

'There's a weight, a half-hundred, somewhere,' said Barney; 'where is it, Nell?'

'Oh, the old weight, is it? It's behind the sticks there, I believe. Do you want it?'

My heart leaped to my throat at this inquiry, for just at my foot, where I stood, I felt the hard substance, that I had supposed to be a stone. 'Now for it!' I thought, as I listened in an agony to the next words.

'We'll just tie it round his waist, Bill; 'twill be a nice buckle for his belt, and will keep him down a while in the bottom of the hole.'

'Shall I get it now?' asked the old hag.

'Time enough,' responded the other, 'when we set out. Get us the supper, though.'

Some relief was afforded by this respite; but the faint hope which I had just begun to entertain, that I might possibly be able to evade discovery until the men departed with their victim, and I had the old woman only to deal with, now vanished, as, when the weight came to be looked for, I was sure, of course, to be found, and as certain to be murdered. Some food was placed upon the small table drawn in front of the fire, while a candle fixed in a sconce against the wall added a feeble illumination to the firelight. The three partook of the meal in silence, and then the men smoked, during which an hour might have passed; scarcely a sound being heard save a low moan or restless movement from the poor lad, who was evidently writhing in agony from the physical torture of the tight cording of his limbs, as well as harassed, no doubt, with the horrible apprehension of his coming doom.

'Look out, Nell,' were the first words spoken by Barney, that broke the stillness—'look out, and see what time of night it is.'

The old woman rose, opened the door, and, judging by what external appearances I know not, in a few moments turned in again. 'Tis no more than eight o'clock,' she said.

'Eight o'clock! Four or five hours yet, Bill. Let's have a sleep; we're not to meet at the cross till one.—Do you sit up and watch, Nell,' he continued; 'and wake us about twelve, mind.'

In a few minutes, the two miscreants had disposed themselves beside the fire, 'dragging over

them some loose garments supplied by Nelly; and in a very short time their deep heavy breathing betokened that both were fast asleep. A turmoil of anxious thoughts literally seethed through my brain in the brief period of stillness that followed. Could I take advantage of their sleep? Could I take any step, and what, for my extrication from this dreadful peril? At length, a low parched voice, a kind of husky whisper, it seemed, rose upon the quiet of the place. 'Nelly, for the dear love of God, have pity on me, and save me, now that they are asleep.'

There was no answer. 'Who knows but she has dropped off too,' I thought.

'Nelly, if you hope for mercy yet, listen to me, save me,' again whispered that weak voice of anguish.

'Whisht, will ye,' replied the old woman, evidently quite awake. 'It's no use your talking; you'd have sold Bill to the gallows; and if the liftin' of my little finger would save ye, I wouldn't.'

'Give me a sup of wather, will ye?' he asked. 'I think I'll go mad.'

'I'll give you that much, at any rate,' she said; 'though it's enough of it you'll get afore long, I'm thinking.'

The old hag rose and gave him some water from a tin vessel, but bitterly persisted in her refusal either to aid his escape, or even to loosen the cords that were so cruelly tormenting him. When Nelly replaced the water-can on the table, she replenished the fire, settled the covering more carefully round the young man Bill, and then muttered, in a kind of soliloquy: 'No fear but I'll wake in time; an hour at most will do me.' She moved towards the old bed, eyeing the prisoner's bonds, as she passed him, to see that all was right there, and threw herself upon the rickety resting-place, that groaned and creaked beneath her weight, as she turned away from the light. Thank God, almost passed my lips in an audible utterance. For the first time, I ventured to alter my position. I was so numbed and cramped that I could hardly stir. Soon the deep breath of the third sleeper was heard; the candle had been extinguished. The fire burned less brightly, yet shed a crimson glow through the whole apartment, shewing me, as I gazed with less apprehension round the wood-work screen, the dusky figures and swarthy frowning faces of the two sleeping men; while it illuminated with a fainter light the recumbent form of the doomed culprit, disclosing a ghastly face, stamped with an expression of the deepest anguish, with the eyes closed, but not in sleep, as a low sighing moan that occasionally escaped from his lips but too plainly indicated.

CHAPTER III.

To take swift advantage of so unexpected a turn in the tide of danger, was of course my foremost thought, and I was just about to glide out from my hiding-place, when I remembered that considerable caution was necessary with reference to the youth Sweeny, who, utterly unconscious of my being in the apartment, might, in his surprise, give expression to some sound that would arouse the sleepers, and destroy us both. To release him from his bondage and peril, I was, of course, as resolved on as to extricate myself. I crept out as gently as

I could, and stood for a moment on the floor, to see if I could attract his notice. I was just by the bed where the old woman lay, a propinquity that I dreaded, as her softer breathing intimated a lighter sleep than seemed to have locked the two ruffians at the fire. Still the young man remained with closed eyes, and it was only as I was just beside him that he started with a bound, and glared upon me with a new terror in his face. I doubt not but that he thought, as I rose up before him so unexpectedly in that dusky light, that I was a spirit from the other world. 'Hush!' I whispered, putting my lips to his ear—not a word, pointing to the men. 'I was over there; I know all about you; wait till I cut those cords.' When with my penknife I had done so, he was some minutes before he could use his freed limbs. It required but few words to enjoin speed and caution. 'Do you unbar the door,' I again whispered; 'and, for your life, take care of a sound.' Slowly and softly, we moved on. I possessed myself of the loaded pistol that lay close by one of the sleepers, as I passed him. But our chief difficulty lay in getting the door opened. The iron bar that crossed it was fixed in a staple, and fitted it so tightly as to require considerable effort for its release, while the nervousness with which his whole frame shook made Sweeny but a clumsy hand.

'Let me try,' I said at last in despair.

I had just succeeded in drawing out the bar, and with scarcely a sound, when my companion, in a horrified tone, cried: 'For God's sake, hurry; I hear the old woman stirring.'

I instantly pulled the bolt back more rapidly; and not aware of its weight, it fell with a dull heavy clang on the earthen floor. I hardly now know what at that terrible moment we did. There was an instantaneous rustling movement from the bed; but we waited for nothing. All I can recollect is, that, quick as lightning, we were both out upon the heath. 'I'll hold you; I don't know the way,' I gasped, as I dreaded that my companion might think only of himself, and desert me. I am sure that he never dreamed of doing so. He seized me tightly by the arm; and on we went headlong, plunging through swamps, and more than once falling over some unseen impediment. The night was very dark, and I trusted entirely to my guide. Want of breath at last compelled us to halt, and we stood panting for a moment. Not a sound of any kind reached us. If pursued at first, our foes must have been at fault, as we heard nothing of them.

'Tell me, what was to be done to-night at the colonel's?' I asked Sweeny.

'Fire and murder,' was his expressive answer.

'Come on there at once—you know the way,' I said—'will you?'

'Yes,' and without another word, diverging a little from the course we had been pursuing, we again hurried forward with fresh speed. We soon reached the termination of the bog, crossed a road, and got into some fields.

'Over here,' whispered Sweeny, 'is the colonel's.' Colonel Grey, he added, in reply to an inquiry. 'What are you going to do there?'

'To warn them—to save them, to be sure,' I answered. 'And never fear,' I continued, as I noticed some reluctance on the part of the lad; 'I saved you already, and I'll take care of you still: no harm shall come to you.'

We continued our course through two or three fields, and turned out on what appeared to me to be a narrow by-road, when suddenly, as if from the ditch close to us, a deep hoarse voice gave a challenge: 'Who goes there?'

'May I never!' ejaculated Sweeny, in a trembling whisper; 'if 'tisn't the boys: they're waitin' here for the rest to go up to the colonel's.'

'Answer them boldly,' I whispered.

Sweeny replied to the challenge, when a rapid cross-questioning ensued, and some pass-words were demanded and given.

'Who's with you?' asked the speaker who challenged us, now standing out on the road, and who seemed to be the leader of the party who were still concealed in the ditch.

A momentary hesitation nearly proved fatal to us.

'Oh,' he answered, and his voice shook, 'tis Bill, sure. We are to go on, Barney said, and see all's right, and give you the signal.'

'You had better stay here,' gruffly responded the speaker. 'Go on, indeed. What signal?'

'Just a whistle, and no more; I must be ruled by Barney, as he's the leader to-night,' replied Sweeny, with an affectation of sulkiness in his tone, that shewed more presence of mind than I had hoped for.

'Well, on with you then; and if you spoil it all, 'tisn't my doing.' And, to my infinite relief, the speaker sank again into the shelter from which he had emerged.

We passed leisurely forward beside the lurking party, afraid to go fast, lest suspicion should be aroused; but we had not advanced a dozen paces, when the hard heavy tramp of feet, running at full speed upon the road, distinctly reached our ears; and from the stir among the ambushed men, was evidently heard by them too.

'On, on, for our very lives!' exclaimed Sweeny. 'Come this way—quick;' and he plunged in among some thick plantations, through which it was no easy task in the darkness to advance. We caught, as we forced our way through, voices loud and furious behind us, and the single terrible expression: 'Hell's fire, man, be after them!' discovered to us at once the danger we had to apprehend.

'This way, this way,' cried Sweeny, dragging me forward: 'we may do them yet.'

In two or three minutes, we reached a small wooden door in a wall, with which my companion seemed acquainted. He opened it quickly; and then, when we passed through, bolted it on the other side. It admitted us into what looked like the extensive back-premises of a spacious mansion, that rose up dark and gloomy on our left. Sweeny strode rapidly on to where a single light was burning in a small window, low, near the ground. At this, he gave two peculiar taps. At once the light moved.

'The moment he opens the door,' whispered Sweeny—'that he's coming now to do—you manage him with that,' pointing to the pistol I had. 'Tis Griffen, the butler, I mean; he's in the plot; and then you can alarm the house; and there's not a moment to be lost.'

Most cautiously, an old gray-haired, respectable-looking servant opened the door at which we had stationed ourselves.

'Is it all right, Barney?' asked a low voice.

'Yes, to be sure,' exclaimed Sweeny, pushing in, as I followed; and instantly shutting the door

again behind us, he seized the candle from the man's hand, while, with the but-end of the pistol, I dealt the treacherous servant a blow that effectually hindered his interfering.

'Go up the stairs there now,' cried Sweeny, 'and wake them up: I'll stay here.'

I dashed on with my pistol, and narrowly escaped being shot down myself, as a close to my strange adventure, by a half-dressed gentleman, who confronted me on the lobby.

'Stop!' I cried, 'till I explain. Your house is just about to be attacked; I am here to warn you.'

A few words put him in possession of all that was necessary then to inform him. A night of alarm and confusion followed within the building; but, to our surprise, no attempt from without was made; why, we could not tell. My strange first acquaintance with Colonel Grey led to a close intimacy—though not in Tipperary, as he soon after left the county—resulting in what in no way concerns this present narrative. The poor lad Sweeny was well provided for, and sent abroad; and for myself, I only add, that I never had reason to regret the mistake that led to such unexpected consequences.

AT HOME IN AFRICA.

WHEN the two gallant gentlemen, whose researches have solved the problem of ages, and divested the sacred Nile of its mystery, arranged the plan by which the public were to be made sharers in the adventure of their journey, as well as in the knowledge of its great result, Captain Grant's journal was called into requisition for what we may describe as the domestic part of the proceedings. It is a paradoxical term to apply to a long wandering in an unknown land, but it expresses the difference between the work of Captain Grant and that of Captain Speke; and very much at home, indeed, did the former make himself in Africa. He always writes cheerfully of himself and his surroundings; and if ever the terrible loneliness of the place and the time, and the awful sense of distance, came upon him, he never put it in words, never sought so to solace it. It is very curious to think of that *Walk Across Africa*. Perhaps no human mind could really think it out, except that of him who tells us about it in quiet, unpretending words, and that other mind which has passed away to the fullness of knowledge, which it sought with dauntless ardour here. But one may get some glimpses of it, and the clearest will begin to come when we realise how very little we know about that vast continent, whose memories are so magnificent, whose present realities are so mean. Thebes and Carthage, Alexandria and Tunis, the cradle of nations, the birthplace of history, and its awful, impenetrable grave. A phantasmagoria of names and persons flits before the mind, as one rapid glance shews us Moses and the Pharos, Cæsar and Cleopatra, Hannibal and the terrible Roman legions, Jugurtha and his fierce black soldiery: these are but a few out of the multitude of spectral splendours of the past that flash by while the word 'Africa' is spoken; and behind the vanishing glimmer of their robes and their armour, lies the desert—always a mystery, though we begin to know the nature of its mysteriousness better now, and knowing it, feel how great and awful it is.

The sentiments with which we regard Africa

are of strangely mingled repulsion and attraction. In its human aspects, it is humiliating to our pride. In its natural aspects, it is majestic and beautiful. There the brute creation is seen in all its grandeur and variety, there where the last of God's creatures to whom the mastery over his predecessors was given, has sunk below their level, inasmuch as their physical beauty and their instincts are in their highest state of development, while man's are in their lowest and most rudimentary process.

On the 2d October 1860, Captain Grant's experience of life in Africa commenced, with the beginning of his journey to Kazeh, 500 miles away in 'the interior,' that vague word, whose meaning is so great and portentous, when one thinks it out, remembering that it signifies an advance with every mile into solitude, and a certain degree of danger, a widening distance between the traveller and every custom and association of his home. If we look at a map of the eastern coast of Africa of a few years ago, and from it to Captain Grant's map, we find a blank space, inland and upward, from Zanzibar in the one, and a well-defined district, marked with the names of three distinct countries, in the other. These countries are Uzaramo, Usagara, and Ugogo. They are desolate, though productive; nature is merciful, but man is too ignorant here to make the best of her gifts. Cattle is scarce, but suddenly, on the march, the travellers come upon the huge rhinoceros, striding heavily along, with his hoarse grunt; upon zebras cantering through open forests of bare-poled trees; upon flocks of graceful antelopes, feeding with the alert watchfulness that seems almost misplaced, where their human enemies are so few; upon the beautiful brindled gnu; and anon, upon droves of buffalo, crashing through the reeds and marshes, through the gaunt forest, and flat grass lands. A strange march, with savages for its companions, with the grandest and most beautiful of the brute creation for its pictures and its interruptions, for every now and then the slender head and large bright shallow eyes of the giraffe appear over the tops of the acacia-trees. A strange march, with its constant anxiety about the supply of meat and drink, and its responsibilities laid upon the white men, when, for thirty miles at a stretch, no water is to be seen, and rest is to be had only in the midst of a savage crowd, who make night hideous with their cries and their dances. A march along whose track hyenas lurk, and weasels, ferrets, and foxes burrow; across whose course vast herds of wild boar gallop, with erect heads and tails straight up; where crocodiles lie in the muddy sluggish streams, and hippopotami roll and tumble in the water. A march enlivened rarely by the song of birds, though often by their plumage, and the swift rustle of their wings, crossed, too, sometimes by the ominous crane, and hawk, and raven; once, on the bare plains of Ugogo, by a gang of speeding ostrich. Surely on such a march the white men must have had strange thoughts, and wondered whether the human kind had not, in this wondrous continent, intruded on the natural realm and supremacy of the brute creation.

When men come into view upon this journey, they are hideous, naked, greasy, degraded beings, bedecked with beads, sea-shells, and bits of tin; their bodies smeared with red clay, and their woolly hair twisted into hanks with bark fibre.

They are avaricious and murderous, and their only trace of faith is in the fear of magic. So the Wazaramo. Further on, on the map, and on the march, are the Wasagara, a people still more wretched, because the objects of constant attack by others, and numbers of whom are carried into slavery. Then the march has to be carried on through skirmishes and attacks, for the white men are suspected of being come to put down slavery, and an effort is made to stop them. But they go on, and the savage people are put to flight; they go on, over beautiful hills, and through woods carpeted with convolvulus, to the district of the Wagogo, a people even more hideous than the previously visited tribes; their ear-lobes being distended by a plug of wood; and their nature even lower, cunning and avarice being its marked and miserable characteristics. When Kazeh is reached, the march is suspended for fifty-one days, and the white men encamp in a valley, where there is nothing to cheer the eye or feed the mind, where rills run through grass, and open out on white sand, where they are surrounded by low bare hills, overhung with unhealthy mist, which, when it rolls down into the valley, carries the fever demon on its sullen flakes, and they learn the utmost of the suffering they have undertaken to endure, sickness, nigh unto death, in a distant, savage, and unknown country. The fever spared none, but the suffering must have been very unequally divided. It passed, and they began to live at Kazeh, in a condition of climate which somewhat disconcerts one's ordinary ideas of African weather, for it included heavy rain, cold wind, foggy mornings, and profuse night-dew.

The next morning lay by beautiful ways, through wooded valleys, and over wooded hills, and by plentiful water-courses, under a fierce sun in the day, but in the mornings and evenings, through cool and fragrant air; everywhere nature bountiful of gifts, and man niggard of toil, and devoid of intelligence. At Mincega, the palm, lost sight of since the travellers last saw its graceful clusters waving along the coast-line, reappears, and the fruit in profuse luxuriance tempts them at every step. All along the route, barter and sale are kept up, and the usual thieving propensities are displayed. Here, too, they come upon the track of the terrible lion, 'king by uncontested right,' and the tales they hear are corroborated by the mangled remains of the victims. More sad and revolting are the gangs of slaves in chains, kept here, just alive, to be sent on to the coast. Captain Grant bought one of them, a fine fellow, who had been in chains five years, and had been horribly tortured. He proved a valuable, grateful, and faithful servant to the white man, brought by so strange a Providence into the heart of an unknown country, to befriend that creature of the Divine hand in his need. On the march, again, outside the Wezee villages, and away on the track, nameless on the map, but beautiful as ever, and through the immense forests, where any trace of man is felt as a relief even by the savages, who erect triumphal-arches over the path where the footprints are, they come to Ukuni, and are among the Watusi people, who live in a pretty country, and have a better notion of cultivation than the other tribes.

And now Captain Grant is really at home in Africa, for he has a long stay before him, and his first proceeding is to visit the sultan, a fat

old man, who sits on a stool, and never leaves off drinking *pombé*! Then he goes house-hunting, which is almost as troublesome an operation there as here; and when he has found his house, and arranged his Seedees, and his calves, and his visiting-list, and his tariff of prices, and made his observations on the weather, which are once more surprising, he gets fever again, and goes on having it every second day with great regularity, and apparent cheerfulness. On the off-days, he studies manners, which are not refined, and customs, which are very strange, and many of them revolting. Animals used for food are hunted through the lanes, and beaten down with bludgeons; butter is never eaten, but employed in smearing the bodies of the men and women. That strange, contradictory scarcity which strikes one in reading all narratives of African travel, is always present in this. Large and small game is sometimes, but rarely, trapped; lions and lynxes are the sole property of the sultan. Captain Grant's Seedees were put to hard shifts for a livelihood, and killed almost all the fish in the country. A sottish, cruel, superstitious, brutish-ignorant race are all the inhabitants of the 'Land of the Moon,' worthy of their drunken old sultan, who kept constantly demanding 'magic medicine' from Captain Grant—who put on the captain's shoes, and trailed his feet on the ground, to the admiration of all the boys in the village, and who exhibited a degree of rapacity which would do credit to a Jew money-lender in the centre of civilisation. The sultana was not a bad old lady by any means; indeed, the women appear to be a higher order of animals. They delighted hugely in a looking-glass belonging to the white men, but seemed perfectly aware that their personal appearance was susceptible of improvement. Inexpressible sad are the lives of women in these heathen places; unequally so, however. It is not until Captain Grant describes life at Uganda, that we find the brutal murder of women a daily practice, regarded by the people with stolid indifference. The children shew some intelligence and ingenuity, and it is sorrowful to think how distant the time seems when it will be possible to elevate their condition.

In these villages are no wells, and the habitations are huts, whose shelter is shared by human beings and brutes in common; on the tree-tops, and on poles fixed into mounds, are stuck the skulls and hands of enemies killed in action; and around these ghastly trophies, in whirling clouds of dust, the savage creatures dance their horrid dances to the music of their drums, and of cries imitative of the jackals. A horribly savage atmosphere pervades this region. Religion, idols, Sabbaths, or holydays are quite unknown; while fear, which is the prevalent moral atmosphere of the African, finds its lowest and most despicable expression. The Watusi could not be persuaded but that the tin-boxes carried by the white men contained the plundering Watuta, transformed, and coming to kill them. It is a relief when the march begins again towards Karague. Ukuni must have soon begun to seem merely an ugly dream, as they went on through soft grass and under splendid forest-trees, by a changed water-shed, running, like their thoughts and hopes, to Victoria Nyanza. Did the longing for home come upon them very fiercely and yearningly as the wild rocks and crags, interspersed with trees, overhung the valleys, and

brought Killarney before them—as a water-fall burst upon their delighted eyes, whose spray fell over ferns and mosses, growing in the richest luxuriance? Did home seem nearer and more real, or further and less attainable? On this march they saw numerous beautiful birds, and heard the only graceful and fanciful superstition of which one finds any record among the Africans. It relates to the 'king of the birds,' and consists of the belief, that he moves escorted by a staff of little songsters, whose duty it is, should a feather fall from the king, to tear it to pieces, thus preventing its being put on an arrow, and ever bringing the winged death to one of its own species. This was a long march, and a various. The tribes encountered were not quite so degraded; and Captain Grant records that he saw one really beautiful woman, 'black but comely,' like the apologist of Solomon's Song. On their way, the travellers saw several cairns, those tokens of remembrance and association which are to be found in every part of the world.

From November 1861 to April 1862, the white men studied African life at Karague. Its features were extraordinary, but perhaps less repulsive than elsewhere, though the succession to the throne had just been settled by recourse to magic, and the body of the late king had been sewn up in the skin of a cow, and built up in a hut with a number of women and cattle, left there to die, and moulder into dust. The new king, Rumanika, was a very fine man, fastidious about his food, and never known to be intoxicated, and he combined the offices of prophet, priest, and king. His five enormous wives were kind to the 'Wazoongo,' as they called the strangers; but would not consent to the proposition that one of the young princes should be taken to England for education. 'There would be no milk for him,' they said, 'and he would die.' Their chief sustenance is boiled plantain or milk. A strange life it must have been among these people, who believe trees to be the greatest object in creation, and that lions (which are never seen) protect the mausoleum of the departed kings, among whom traces of Jewish worship are found, who have no regular laws, or roads, or trade, or marriage-ceremonies; but whose instincts seem better and higher than those of the tribes more distant from the equator. Strange and dismal to lie ill with a lingering and painful disease in this place, the only white man there. Strange to be tenderly waited on by these fellow-creatures, with whom fellowship, save in such offices, was impossible; to lie and listen, of nights, to their monotonous shouting of rude songs, the merest crude elements of composition, round the camp-fire; strange, when convalescence came, to explore an equatorial country, so beautiful that it can be compared only to the English Lake district; and to hear the first news of the Nile! Stranger than all, to think that as the waters the white man then gazed upon mingled with those of the Mediterranean, the time might come when a traveller could go from Karague to London by water. The travellers discovered afterwards that cataracts present the only obstacle to that grand route. Away, then, on the Uganda march, with all its fantastic accompaniments, down the Kitangule in canoes, through scenes of ever-changing beauty, to the shores of the Victoria Nyanza, that vast sea of 20,000 square miles, never traversed from side to side since the creation of its waters on the world's

birthday. Some lingering on the beautiful shores of this latest-found wonder of the world, and then on the march to Uganda, where the friends met again after four months' separation, and where the very height of barbarism appears to be reached. Here the king received the travellers in state, seated on grass, with a dog behind him, his commander-in-chief at his feet, and a number of women on his left hand; and during the audience, a wretched creature was dragged out to be cruelly slain, without attracting a passing notice.

It must have been hard for Englishmen to see such sights, and keep the silence imperative for their own safety; harder still for them to live next the hut to which the executioner dragged his victims, and to hear shrieks of agony day and night; hardest of all to behold women sent to execution, sometimes four in a day, to see the naked, trembling, weeping wretches, bruised and bleeding, dragged by ropes to the *Aceldama*, which Captain Grant once went to see, but turned from, satisfied by observing the vultures which sat upon the trees, waiting until the work should be done, and their turn have arrived. Unquestionably, Uganda has more claims upon our interest than any other of the districts passed over in this wonderful walk; but the scent of blood, and the atmosphere of lust and cruelty, are about it, and we long to be upon the march once more. And now the march lies through a fertile country, where there are low grazing lands, and beautiful cattle, where the N'jezza is first seen, and buffalo, and lions are trepped, where the natives are adverse to the strangers, and afraid of them, and the conditions of life are hard and perplexing. But the white men are advancing, their purpose grows near of fulfilment, Ungoro is a capital sporting country, and the march to the capital of King Kamarasi is diversified by an elephant-hunt. The sojourn at Ungoro, though monotonous and miserable, was better than that at Uganda. The white men were not obliged to behold savage cruelty and murder in silence, and the king, though rude, was not unkindly. One question, one subject, one hope constantly occupied and agitated them. Was Petherick upon the Nile with boats for them? At length it was answered by the appearance of a messenger with a letter; and on the 9th November 1863, the *Walk Across Africa* was finished, and Captain Grant began his first voyage upon the sacred Nile!

LADY FLAVIA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'LORD LYNN'S WIFE.'

CHAPTER XIX.—CONFIDENCES.

'I WILL tell you, papa, now they are gone,' whispered Amy, nestling down her heavy aching head upon her father's shoulder, and looking fondly up at his sun-browned face, and the soft smile that belied all the sternness of the iron mouth and the gray moustaches. 'I could not speak before Aunt Alleyne; she thinks'—and here Amy smiled in spite of her sorrowful looks—'she thinks she knows young girls like me, and everything they can possibly feel and wish, exactly, just as that lecturer we saw at the Polytechnic poured a pink liquid into a yellow liquid, and they both became white, or took fire, or whatever it was, just as he had told us. But Aunt Alleyne

does not know about this.' And here Amy paused, and began to tremble again; and Colonel Ford spoke to her in a soothing tone, such as he might have used to calm her to sleep in some infantine ailment long years ago: 'Yes, yes, pet. But you must not worry yourself with talking just now, dear. You shall go to sleep, and I will mount guard, and see nobody disturbs you. It was only the heat.'

'It was not the heat, papa!' cried Amy passionately. 'I let my aunt have her own way, and Uncle William too. They are good kind folks; but they cannot understand anything beyond the regular humdrum of everyday life. And this is something new—something strange and dreadful. Papa, I really feel as if I had been near something wicked and hurtful; something that wished ill to me, and would harm me if it could. I shook all over when her eyes met mine, and yet indeed—indeed I am not a coward, generally. The French girls said it was English *bêtise*, when I did not scream at harmless poor toads and spiders, as they did.'

Colonel Ford laughed, and then looked grave, and he patted his daughter's hand with infinite gentleness. 'Well, Amy,' he said, 'you shall tell it all to papa. I believe that will be the best, after all. Whose eyes do you speak of?'

Amy's answer was made in a low but a firm voice: 'The eyes of her who was pointed out to me as my dear friend and school-companion, as the Lady Flavia Clare, who was as a sister to me at the convent of Our Lady of Carmel. Papa—the lady whom Uncle William pointed out to me is not Lady Flavia Clare—she is not my dear Flavia. But why, why does she bear her name, and hold her place in the world?'

The colonel made a wry face. He was sorry to hear his daughter speak thus, not that he in the slightest degree believed that there was any real foundation for what she said. He was not a credulous man, or, if his nature inclined him to believe others to be as truthful as himself, long habit had steeled him against too easy faith. He had sat on silken cushions, face to face with maharajahs and their ministers and generals, and had listened to falsehoods the most unblushing that Aryan brain could spin, and Aryan tongue could tell, yet never moved a muscle of his countenance. He had seen rich native contractors, caught red-handed in speculations, grovel abjectly at his feet, and embrace his knees, as they tearfully swore by Siva and Brahma, and the great oath on Gunga water, that they were innocent of having wronged the Company Bahadur of a single rupee, and that all the witnesses were suborned perjurers. But still it vexed him that this delusion should take possession of his child. He was confident in her truthfulness, but it annoyed him that she should be capable of such romantic folly. He tried to laugh it off, as he said: 'My little girl must not take her notions from novels, nor imagine English society in the nineteenth century to be full of crimes and horrors, like Mrs Radcliffe's romances—which, by the by, were about the only novels I ever read, except Scott's, and I remember thinking them mighty fine compositions before I went out to India. But if you will take my word for it, life is a prosaic affair for most of us, with its duties, and affections, and hopes, and joys, and griefs, no doubt; but these are quite enough to

bear, Amy dear, without any wonderful adventures and soul-harrowing revelations. You have too quick an imagination, pet, and are too ready to take every wind-mill for a giant, like Don Quix'—

'O don't, pray, don't,' cried Amy almost petulantly. 'Papa, you are much wiser and older than I am, and I would rather trust to your judgment than to mine, a thousand times over. But not in this case. There is no sentimental fancy here—indeed, indeed there is not. The lady who kept the stall to-day was not the same who stood sobbing by my bedside, a few months ago, in our little room in the French convent. I had a perfect view of her. I could not be mistaken. She was a stranger.'

There is a contagion in earnestness; and it is very hard to disbelieve what we are told by a person who has entire and fervid faith in the assertion itself. The colonel began to waver in his opinion. 'You are sure,' he said, 'that the person your Uncle William shewed you was the *bond fide* Lady Flavia Clare who kept the stall? I did not see her myself, at all, though I heard some silly young men prating about her beauty, as if she had been a wonder of the world. But over the people's heads I could see that there were several ladies about the stall. Perhaps you made a mistake, and this was some sister or cousin.'

Amy shook her head in decisive dissent. 'I am sure there was no mistake,' she said. 'The other ladies, Uncle Alleyne told me, were Mrs Dibbs, the bishop's wife, and Lady Mortlake and her daughters, two fine tall young ladies, not in the least like that—that— O, papa, what puzzles me is, that there *was* a likeness, a very slight likeness, but still a perceptible one, between Flavia and the girl I saw to-day. They certainly are alike; and Flavia, too, like her, had beautiful long dark hair, but she did not wear it in loose curls, as that other did; and I think Flavia was taller'—

'Depend upon it, Amy,' interrupted the colonel, 'either you are mistaken—different styles of dress, and different habits of life, make a surprising change in a young lady at the plastic age of eighteen—either you are mistaken, or there is another explanation of the mystery. There are two Lady Flavia Clares; the name very probably belongs to more than one noble family, and your school-friend is the daughter of some other earl than an Earl of Mortlake.'

But Amy refused to receive this theory, however plausible it might sound. She was positive that the lady pointed out to her was not her friend; and she was equally sure that her friend had been a daughter of that Earl of Mortlake whose death had been announced to her by Dr Perinet, who had heard with regret from Mr Royston, on his return to the château, that the late lord had not lived long enough to see his long-banished daughter before his eyes closed on the world. There was a *Dod's Peerage* in the room—even homely Mrs Alleyne could not dispense with that inevitable volume—and its pink and gold binding caught Amy's eye. The pages were hastily rustled over, and search was made for the noble surname of Clare.

'I told you so,' said the colonel triumphantly, when the oracle announced that Right Honourable the Earl of Sheerness, in the peerage of Great Britain, to say nothing of Right Honourable the Earl of Kilmanning and Viscount Coolyboy, in the peerage of Ireland, were Clares. But alas! among

the numerous offspring of both these illustrious persons, no daughter bore the name of Flavia. There was but one Lady Flavia Clare, and she was the only child of Francis, seventh Earl of Mortlake.

'I can't make it out,' said the colonel, knitting his brows thoughtfully.

Amy went on to relate, for the first time, how very keenly she had felt the sting of her school-fellow's apparent caprice and neglect; how unkind conduct and fickleness on the part of Flavia astonished and pained her the more because they seemed so utterly foreign to her friend's character; how Flavia had been the most simple, humble-minded, thoroughly good of all possible good girls, not a bit proud of the rank and prospective wealth that had made more than one juvenile companion ready to fawn upon her and flatter her, since money and station will produce their effect even in a convent; how nothing could be more dissimilar than the manner of the Lady Flavia of the house of Our Lady of Carmel, timid, reserved, and rather grave, and the manner of that sparkling Lady Flavia of whom Amy had caught a glimpse in the Slochester town-hall.

The colonel listened, indulgently at first, then intently, and presently a crowd of thoughts came thickly pressing into his mind, each thought with a tongue, as it were, that cried out clamorously to him that what his daughter said was worthy of more attention than men of the world are usually willing to pay to the sayings of an inexperienced girl on the threshold of womanhood. There was nothing shallow or pert in Amy Ford; her youth gave her the power of being easily pleased, and her knowledge of life was necessarily slight; but in listening to her as she spoke with all the earnest warmth that was in her heart, the colonel recognised in her some of the clear-sighted common-sense and energy of purpose by which he had himself made his way out of the ruck of his Anglo-Indian contemporaries.

Although the old soldier had seen fit to check his child's supposed taste for detecting romantic mysteries in the midst of the common-place events of life, he was not such a disbeliever in such matters as he chose to appear to be. He had heard very strange stories on very good authority, and had spoken with the actors in dramas of real life compared with which *Macbeth* and *Othello* would shew but as milk-and-water presentments of human wickedness and passion. He had diplomatized with a turbaned Richard III. whose guilty slumbers ought to have been haunted by the ghosts of more nephews than two, of more wives than one, and of certainly more than a solitary brother. He had been envoy to a queen-mother regent who had received him seated on a throne, under which it was matter of notoriety that a shrieking slave-girl had been buried alive. Horrible tales of the dark doings in the dark places of the zenana were as familiar to his ear as the *Newgate Calendar* to a Newgate ordinary, and these he knew to be for the most part only too literally true.

But these things had been done by dark-skinned humanity, that huddled itself up in shawls and Dacca muslin, and wore bangles on its arms, and diamonds in its cap of state, and not seldom a jewelled nose-ring. All that cruelty and treachery, and vile greed of gold, and pleasure, and revenge—so Colonel Ford fancied—sprouted like foul fungi under the Asiatic sun alone, and had been left to

the eastward of the Cape of Good Hope, as the Company's old officers used to leave their military rank, coming home civilians in the eye of British law. The colonel could not easily bring himself to believe that the same passions could exist in a bosom cased in broadcloth, cut by Poole or Moses, as in a breast swathed with Benares silk or Delhi kincoba. He had chosen to fancy, in spite of police reports, that the mechanism of modern European society was so nicely counterpoised, and so carefully oiled, as to work without jarring or straining, and that accidents were all but impossible. But now he doubted.

While Richard Ford sat bending his shaggy gray eyebrows, and paying what was but a forced and partial attention to his daughter's words, so active was his own practised mind in scanning the case according to the meagre evidence he possessed, Mr Alleyne the vicar came in, sorely discomposed in countenance and bearing.

'Here's a pretty business, Ford,' he said: 'really people seem to think a parson a sort of Jack-of-all-trades, for they come to me to help them out of every hobble that they get into. Here's Mrs Turner, the sick-nurse, sitting in my study, looking as if she were sick herself, and indeed I had to give her some brandy for what she calls her spasms; but the truth is, the woman's frightened out of what wits she has; and the doctor being out on his rounds, she comes to me as coolly as if I kept a register-office for the constant supply of Mrs Gamps. It's a shame and a plague, just as I wanted to see after my sermon and the celery-beds.'

All this time the worthy clergyman was jerking to and fro about the room, adjusting his neckcloth, hunting for his gloves, and brushing his hat with his coat-sleeve, evidently preparing to sally forth into the outer world.

'What's the matter, though? You have not told us that yet,' said the colonel with a smile.

Mr Alleyne wheeled round: 'Bless me, I forgot. Well, then, after lunch, and just before we started for that luckless fancy fair—and, by the by, Miss Amy, I hope you feel better now? that's right!—the landlady of the *Royal George* hotel, which is just within the bounds of my parish, more's the pity, came in a state of excitement to say that a strange gentleman, who seemed to know no one in Slochester, had been taken very ill at her house, and was lying in Number Thirty-nine, in a burning fever, and light-headed. Would I please to come over? I asked if she had sent for a doctor, and it seems she had called at Smithson's door—Smithson attends us, or did, when the children were at home—but he was out; and so, in great distress of mind, she had come round to me. Well, it came out that Mrs Knight's distress was rather selfish, for she was terribly afraid the sick man should die in the inn, and give her the annoyance of a funeral, and perhaps an inquest.'

'An inquest!' exclaimed the colonel. 'Why, surely you stay-at-home English folks don't insist on the formality of an inquest, whenever a patient dies of fever?'

Mr Alleyne stared. 'Fever, no,' said he; 'but when a fellow receives a charge of Number Six shot in his ribs and shoulder, and lingers a few weeks, they call in the coroner, just as if he had been left dead on the spot. Didn't I say that this was the gentleman who was wounded by some unknown person, in a lane near Chartley Parva, and who

was supposed to have got well, and would have been well, but for his own confounded folly—Captain Royston?'

'Captain Royston!' exclaimed Amy from the sofa. 'I wonder if he belongs to those Roystons I was speaking of, papa; the family that Flavia was so intimate with, and who lived in the Château des Roches, at Gresnèz, near the convent. I know that Mr Royston, the gentleman who brought Flavia to England when her father was so ill, had a son who was called Captain Royston, and that he was at home during part of the time when Flavia visited there. She never liked him, though I remember teasing her about him, and asking whether he were handsome.'

'Royston?' said the colonel in his turn. 'The name comes back to me, somehow. Something about a court-martial at Poonah or Kirkee, and a sentence of dismissal for gambling and dishonourable practices. It may be quite another person, though, of course, and I don't remember the facts of the case.'

'I can't get in a word edgewise, if you take me up in that fashion,' said the vicar of St Eanswith's, with an air of serio-comic distress; 'but the long and short of it is this. Mrs Knight wanted to know whether the law would countenance her in turning her sick guest out of doors, and I rated her pretty sharply for her inhumanity. Then she got into a more Christian frame of mind, and went to fetch a nurse, one of our three Slochester nurses, Mrs Turner, a respectable woman, in spite of my joke about her being of the Gamp sisterhood—she sat up six nights with our eldest boy, Willy, when he had the scarlet fever, and— But I never could keep to the thread of my discourse out of the pulpit. The fact is, that the patient is raving, and the nonsense he talks is so frightful, or she says it is, that she is afraid to stay in the room. Her nerves are none of the strongest, and she really is alarmed, and has come to resign her post. Mrs Owens, one of the other two nurses, is a woman who would nurse all Bedlam, I believe, without attending to a word; but she won't be at liberty till late to-night, it seems. So I must go.' And the vicar began putting on his gloves.

'You must go—to play sick-nurse?' asked the colonel.

Mr Alleyne said yes, he must go, or Mrs Alleyne must take the place of the craven nurse until the more efficient Mrs Owens should be ready to enter on her new duties. This Captain Royston, however much of a stranger and a scamp he might be, was temporarily a parishioner; and if he had been cashiered by sentence of all the courts-martial from Cape Comorin to the Khyber Pass, he was entitled to be taken care of in the hour of sickness. The Alleynes, husband and wife, did a great deal of parochial work of this kind when ague or typhus was busy in Slochester, and though this was an unexpected call, the vicar was by no means disposed to treat it with neglect.

'Stay!' said the colonel, suddenly getting up from his seat at the head of the old-fashioned scroll sofa; 'I'll walk down with you. It won't be the first gunshot wound I shall have seen, nor the first delirious patient. I do not profess to be a doctor, but I may be of use in this sort of thing.'

So the brothers-in-law, clerical and military, left the house together; and Mrs Alleyne came to keep Amy company, and favoured her with a good

deal of her verbal wisdom, cut and dried, with a particular application to almost every variety of human trouble, and notably to the case of 'young things of your age, my dear,' who faint at fancy fairs.

CHAPTER XX.—THE GENTLEMAN IN NUMBER THIRTY-NINE.

'Which it's dreadful, sir, even to think of such goings on; and I've brought up six out of eight; and if it wasn't that the eldest, sir, who's a sawyer, begging your pardon, in the Royal Dockyard at Portsmouth, hadn't broke his arm, which the doctors said it was a commutated fracture, and he obligated to come home to his native air for nursing, and has been heavy on a narrow income; but leastways so I have got my bread for seven-and-twenty year, and no complaints, but always the first families and the highest testimonials; if you would please to call at Number Six Bench Street; and if out, my youngest girl will be happy to shew the certificates framed and glazed from the County Infirmary, and never no such unpleasantness.'—

Thus far, Mrs Turner, sick-nurse, as she accompanied Colonel Ford and the Rev. William Alleyne along the cobble-stoned by-streets that led to Pyx Street, where the *Royal George*, a good second-rate hotel, was situated. Nor would that worthy lady have desisted from her lucid explanation, had not lack of breath put a padlock on her fluent tongue. As it was, however, she stopped, laid her hand on that portion of her shawl that might be supposed to cover her heart, and panted distressingly, like a drover's dog on a hot day. The vicar looked alarmed, lest a fresh attack of 'spasms,' the conventional malady of Mrs Turner's sisterhood, might supervene, and render spirituous refreshments, not to be obtained without ignominious adjournments to low public-houses, indispensable.

But Mrs Turner had only stopped for breath, and in the present instance her mind was not intent on her favourite nostrums of peppermint-drops, gin and cloves, or even the sovereign west-country remedy of rum and butter. She was indeed as sober by choice as most of her hard-worked class; and if she had accepted the vicar's cognac, it was because she sincerely believed it would do her good. She was a respectable nurse of the soft sort, one of those bundles of shapeless clothes, with a middle-aged female inside the crust of the animated dumpling, who doze pleasantly in great chairs, and wake up periodically to administer medicine; not a rawboned task-mistress, who bullies her victims for their own good. She broke out again: 'Which I wouldn't, not for no money, listen to such gashly things; and me sitting in the room, and shaking like a jelly that hasn't turned properly out of the mould; and though not the first time I've attended the light-headed, no, not by many, I never, no, never, heard a gentleman run on so; and so violent too, and under-waiters got to be called in; but Mrs Owens, which I'll not deny that she has the sperrit of ten such as me, which Miss Jemima Owens she strictly is, never having been married, as I was one-and-thirty year ago, at St Eanswith's Church; but afore your reverence's time, sir, though Mrs Owens is fifty-six or seven, if she's a day, and was a ward-woman in the County Lunatic— But here's the hotel, gentlemen.'

Perhaps it was because Mrs Turner had to sit so silent by night, that she indemnified her tongue in this manner; or she may merely have been anxious to clear her professional reputation from the charge of lightly deserting a sick-room; but, at anyrate, she went vigorously on, with no stops to punctuate her oration other than involuntary gasps for breath, till the party arrived at the *Royal George*, and were ushered into the parlour, where the landlady sat in state among her account-books, and a multiplicity of gilt bottles containing cordials of a kind obnoxious to the Maine Liquor Law. Mrs Knight had taken to heart the vicar's lecture of the morning, and was no longer desirous to eject her troublesome guest. But she seemed to consider Captain Royston's presence under her roof as a grievous calamity, which she was bound to bear resignedly, but not cheerfully. No particular change, she said, had taken place since the departure of the frightened nurse. The poor gentleman was talking very much, sometimes low, sometimes loud enough to disturb everybody; but he had not been violent since that time when the under-waiter and the chambermaid had come to assist Mrs Turner in restraining him from his insane attempt to dash himself against the walls. He was 'moaning like' now, and rather less restless. Dr Smithson had seen him once, and would look in again in the evening. He shook his head—the doctor did—when he heard what a deal of brandy and soda-water Number Thirty-nine had taken since he came, and before he fell ill.

Upstairs, preceded by the chambermaid, and followed by the nurse, went the two gentlemen; and before long they heard the groans and broken talk of the invalid through the painted door of his room. They went softly in. The sick man was propped up with pillows, his disordered hair streaming in tawny profusion over the white sheet, and his face terribly haggard, shrunken, and sallow, with the veins standing out like whipcord on his temples. His eyes were glaring at vacancy. It was evident that he neither knew nor cared that strangers were gazing at him.

'He won't die!' said the colonel, after a long look at the sufferer.

'Thank Heaven for that! But are you sure of what you say?' half-whispered the vicar.

Colonel Ford gave rather a melancholy smile. 'Of course I am not sure; I only give my opinion. The issue of life or death is in higher hands than mine; but I have seen very many of these cases among hard drinkers in India. Delirium tremens is hideous in itself, but the first attack is seldom fatal. It is not until repeated paroxysms have worn out the nervous system, that the sufferer sinks into his grave; and I think there is hope here.'

'Dr Smithson didn't say it was—that thing with the hard name you called it, sir,' said Mrs Turner; 'he seemed to take it to be fever from the wound.'

'And so it is,' said the colonel quietly; 'but delirium tremens has come on to complicate the disorder. Now, just let me have my own way. I have seen hundreds of these cases, in private soldiers of our Europeans in India, in officers, and others, and have been obliged to play nurse and surgeon too, in scores of lonely spots where there was no medical assistance procurable. This poor fellow, I feel sure, is in just such a scrape. He has been in India, too, for some of that gibberish he was talking just now was tolerable Hindustani—he

was ordering a syce to bring his horse round—and I can give a shrewd guess at his history. Leave me in charge of him till Mr Smithson the doctor looks in; I should like to have a word with him about the treatment of the complaint, and I will stick to my post till Mrs Owens relieves me.'

'I'll stop too, if you like; it won't be so dull for you,' said Mr Alleyne, but he could not help wincing a little as he made the offer. The truth was, that he did not much fancy such a patient. All this time, the sick man was maundering on with speeches that now and then were unintelligible, but which sometimes were frightful to hearken to, replete with blasphemous words that made the vicar's blood run cold. All this time, too, the sufferer kept thrusting forth his lean hands, as if to push back some invisible foe, and once or twice he shrieked aloud to have 'the snakes, the black, slimy, venomous snakes kept away from the bed.' He saw snakes, he protested, coiling among the curtains, twining about the foot-board, creeping over the counterpane, hissing and writhing, and he screamed out in an agony that they were upon him, and would sting him, since no one came to save him, and then moaned and sobbed like a child in pain.

This was so different from all the harmless wanderings of such few fever-stricken patients as had come under the vicar's notice, that he stood aghast and useless in the sick-room. But Colonel Ford knew well enough that all this snake-talk, all this terror of threatening monsters and venomous reptiles, was an almost invariable symptom of the disorder. He had heard such outcries as this, often and often before, shrieked forth by foaming lips of those whom he had known and liked, those who had been brave and valued officers until the demon Drink enslaved them and brought them down to this earthly hell of the drunkard. He knew, too, that although the sick man was too far gone in delirium to see or hear those who were present, yet by some subtle instinct their presence excited him to his hurt. The room must be cleared. Colonel Ford uncorked the draught which the surgeon had sent round, smelt it and tasted it, and smiled, but he was too good-natured and prudent to disparage Mr Smithson's prescription before the women.

'This,' he thought, as he recorked the phial, 'will do neither good nor harm. I will have a little chat with the doctor when he pays his next visit, and he shall fancy the Indian remedy which I shall modestly hint at is a suggestion of his own. In the meantime, I may safely promise to administer this innocuous stuff according to the label, and I shall be on the spot to stop the poor wretch from committing any fatal imprudence, which is not an unlikely contingency, with such a set of boobies about him.'

But though the colonel thought all this, he said much less, merely undertaking to give the patient his physic, and to watch how the paroxysms affected him, until the surgeon's second visit and the arrival of the nurse.

'Good-bye, Ford, then,' said Mr Alleyne. 'I'll take care to send Mrs Owens the very instant she is at liberty. And as for Miss Amy, she's pretty well now, and in good hands. We'll take care of her. Shall we wait dinner? No? Well, you'll find something kept hot for you when you do come, and a bottle of the East India sherry you praised yesterday. Good-bye.'

Then Colonel Richard Ford sat as still as a mouse beside the bed-head, in that great dimly-covered arm-chair, that seemed to have been constructed expressly for the accommodation of such rotund matrons as Mrs Turner. The sick man raved on—raved of scenes and persons the most incongruous, jumbled together in a grim chaotic medley—of an old mansion in Yorkshire, where he was a boy again, spending his holidays in the midst of a flattering court of grooms and gamekeepers, tearing after the hounds, playing madcap pranks in the village, 'taking off his wine like a man' in company with the hard-drinking set who surrounded his father's horse-shoe table, and getting precociously tipsy amid the noisy approval of his seniors. Hip, hip, hurrah! He was not in Yorkshire now—he was in London, with full pockets, on what he called a spree, and jolly companions were around him. Hip, hip, hurrah! again. There was a grand feast, and they were wetting his commission, as the phrase went, wetting it in a red sea of strong heady port, with punch to finish what champagne and Moselle had begun. Then India, with more revelry, play, quarrels, wild orgies, fierce grumbling and discontent, curses on the climate, duty, discipline, on the scanty remittances from home, on the luck of the ruined gamester, on the heavy interest charged by Indian banks, and the hard terms of Parsee usurers.

'Flames and fury!' he broke out, interlarding his discourse with many interjections best unwritten; 'confound you! how dare you talk of cheating? Who says the cards were marked? Who says that fellow Hartopp was making signals the whole time the game went on? Loaded dice, forsooth! I'll cut the throat of the first man who talks of loaded dice. Gentlemen, play on the square. I'm a gentleman—a Royston of Royston. There's not a man in the regiment has better blood in his veins, nor half so good as mine; and you—you pitiful sneak—your father was a tailor, wasn't he?—it's too much honour for you to be allowed to lose your money in a gentleman's company. Hold your tongue, you snivelling fool! Write home to your mother, and tell her any lie you like: she'll send you the blunt, I'll warrant you, when she hears you're in a scrape. Say you stood security for a brother-officer; but no names, hang you. Come, a little more punch and another cheroot, and I'll give you your revenge at anything you like—blind hookey, écarté, Van John, and we won't play high, you baby—just a chick of rupees!'

Presently, he was in fierce dispute with some imaginary opponent on the subject of a horse-race, and then he started up in bed and tried to clutch the colonel by the throat, vowing to have blood for the insult put upon him; and by the time he was half-forced, half-coaxed into lying down again, his mood had changed, and he was screaming out in mortal terror, now of the snakes, and now of a certain black hound, a big shaggy dog that he conceived to be crouching in the room and lurking behind the curtains, ready to spring upon him.

'Keep him off!' he cried—'the ugly grinning brute. Drive him away; don't let him touch me! I see him; there—there he is, crawling towards the bed—a brute as large as a wolf! Save me—save me! He will be upon me directly. Not there—not there! O doctor, don't leave me alone with him, the brute!'

And with a shrill cry, the trembling wretch cowered down and hid his face with the bed-clothes, all the time holding tight to the hand which Colonel Ford had given him—tight, ay, with the frantic force with which a drowning seaman grips the plank that is his only support above the fathomless depths of the hungry roaring sea. Then, after a long interval, a fresh change occurred; Basil Royston complained no more of the loathsome presence of the reptiles, nor of that of the black hound, fearful images in that dismal procession of phantasms that delirium tremens conjures up. But he was very weak and broken-spirited, wailing and sobbing as if he had been a child, clinging to the colonel, and begging that he might not be left alone, then glancing timorously round the room, lest something baleful might be prowling there still; and then his ravings took another turn, and he struck his forehead with his weak hand, and wept as he called himself a great sinner, a wretch black with crime, and weary with wrong-doing. Next he pronounced a name that made the colonel start and bend forward to hear more—'Lady Flavia Clare;' and then he rambled on, muttering indistinct allusions to things and places of which the colonel knew nothing. But though much of what he said was inaudible, and much obscure, a new and lurid light began to break in upon the intelligence of him whom Chance—if there be such a thing as Chance in this wondrous world, where every heart that throbs is knit by some viewless bonds to other hearts, and where all actions blend into a web of common destiny—had sent to sit beside the bed of this sinful sufferer. Half-uttered words, hints rather than revelations, reached the listener's ears, and make him hearken the more thirstily for confirmation of his fears; and then the black mirror of Basil Royston's unhealthy mind reflected other impressions, and he spoke no more of France, no more of the gaunt gray Château des Roches, no more of the white-walled convent, or of the green vineyards and long dusty stretch of high-road, with its grenadier poplars planted stiffly on either side. He was back in India, not quarrelsome as before, but in the high tide of evil prosperity, with plenty of cash and credit, revelling in native society of not the very highest stamp. Captain Royston's fondness for bad company had met with countenance in the bazaars of Indian cities. He began to troll the refrain of a ditty that Richard Ford knew well—the famous '*tāza be tāza, vīdāno!*' that Hafiz first sung, and that from the poetry of the Persian Anacreon has gradually filtered down to its condition as a sort of 'tol-de-rol' chorus to Hindu drinking-songs. But not a word more that the colonel cared to hear. Not a syllable about the lonely French château, or the neighbouring convent, or the vague and ugly secret of which a glimpse had been suddenly afforded, much as if a dark curtain had been pulled aside in part, and then allowed to drop again.

'Lady Flavia Clare!' thought the colonel as he sat watching through the dusk of the long evening, now and then striking his repeater to learn the hour, that the patient might swallow his medicine with due punctuality—'Lady Flavia Clare! Three times that name has passed the lips of this wretch, and queer words they were that followed the mention of it. Foul-play! yes, I do really begin to believe that there has been foul-play. But how

to see clearly through the labyrinth: the clue is wanting.'

Hours passed slowly by, the deep swift river of Time gliding steadily on, and tumbling over the falls into the yawning gulf of Eternity; and still Richard Ford kept at his post. Then the doctor came, and started to see who was the watcher beside his patient's couch. Colonel Ford conversed apart with him, and Mr Smithson returned to his surgery to bid his assistant make up a prescription of a very different character from the mild palliatives with which the Slochester surgeon had begun the campaign against a disease new to his experience. And Mrs Owens arriving, took her place in the great arm-chair, and promised to be vigilant. Colonel Ford walked slowly back to the parsonage, and as he walked, there were stranger and more startling thoughts passing through his mind than had visited him for many a day. It seemed to him as if he had suddenly received the power to penetrate a veil of fair seeming, and to catch a glimpse of something hideous and unnatural looming darkly beyond.

BEEF AT THREEPENCE A POUND.

THE vast region of South America is for the most part divided into three flat plains of immense extent, by two ridges of mountains running nearly east and west. The northernmost, through which the great river Orinoco flows, is called the *Llanos*; the middle plain, watered by the still larger Amazon, is called the *Selvas*; while the southernmost, in the basin of the river La Plata, constitutes the *Pampas*. All three together cover little less than three million square miles, scarcely diversified by any elevations, but covered either by dense forests or rank grass. The forests are the abode of some of the most savage animals known; the grassy plains belong chiefly to countless herds of wild cattle and horses, who have matters pretty much their own way, and are 'lords of all they survey.' The *Pampas* of La Plata are the plains from which the great store of South American beef is obtained. How many 'beeves' there may be, no one can pretend to say, for they increase and multiply rapidly; and most of them belong to no owner in particular. The *estancias*, or cattle-farms, scattered widely over the plain, are estates of immense area, covering a hundred square miles or more, sometimes as much as four hundred. Each estancia possesses from ten thousand to sixty thousand head of cattle, some wild and some tame. The *estancieros*, or farmers, do not buy the cattle; they catch them anywhere about the estate where they are to be met with, and then rear the young. The laws of *meum* and *tuum* would be very little observed, were it not that each proprietor brands his cattle on the rump. Before the establishment of republics in South America, when the land stagnated under Spanish rule, the cattle were often worth no more than four shillings each, owing to the difficulty of bringing to market the hides, horns, and tallow; but since the spread of population and commerce, consequent on the greater development of individual enterprise—despite the revolutions which occur almost every year in some one or other of the republics—the value has considerably increased, although it is still ridiculously small compared with that of an ox or cow in England.

An estanciero could slaughter one-fourth of his stock of tame cattle every year, and yet keep up his number by their progeny. The herdsmen are the *Gauchos*, a peculiar race, half-Spanish, half-Indian—ignorant, daring, hardy; men who almost live upon horseback, and who can stow away an incredible quantity of beef when it is plentiful, or know how to go without, like other men. When a Gaucho is in the saddle, with his *lasso* and *bolas* ready at hand, the wild cattle have little chance against him. His management of these weapons is something marvellous. The lasso is a long and strong strip of twisted cow-hide, with a running-noose at one end, and at the other a ring or hook, which serves for fastening it to the saddle. When the Gaucho is pursuing a wild ox or cow, he coils up the greater part of the lasso in his left hand, and whirls the noose-end above his head in a very peculiar way, so as to make it swing horizontally round a vertical axis. At the proper moment, he hurls it forward with great force, and with such dexterity as to make the noose fall upon or around the horns. The horse is trained to bear the shock that then ensues. The noose becomes tightened by the desperate efforts which the ox makes to escape, and the horse, galloping away, compels the captured animal to follow him. The rage of some of the poor beasts is terrible; but all in vain.

The *bolas* is a still more formidable weapon than the lasso. It consists of three stones, from two to three inches in diameter, tightly sewed up in ox-skin, and each fastened to a strip of untanned hide five feet long; the other ends of the three strips are then fastened together. The Gaucho seizes one of the balls, whirls the two others in a circle over his head, and then flings them before him with a peculiar bend of his arm. In their progress through the air, the balls fly asunder, and form a triangle eight feet or more in diameter, whirling with great velocity around its own axis. When this weapon hits an animal, the effect is tremendous; one ball, or the strap to which it is attached, hitting an object, the other two balls, forcibly continuing their rotatory motion, envelop and closely embrace whatever comes in their way. Horses hit in this way sometimes fall down as if struck by lightning, and their bones are occasionally broken by the concussion. The *bolas* is more frequently used in war, or to disable savage beasts, than to catch wild cattle, the lasso being more frequently employed for the latter purpose.

Butchering is not a pleasant thing to see anywhere, and in the Pampas it certainly is not attractive. When an estanciero wants to slaughter wild cattle, he allows them to go into the woods to sleep at night (which they like to do, if woods be sufficiently near). His *Gauchos* or peons then creep quietly up to them, stab them as they lie, and then retire. The poor creatures die; and with the dawn, the peons return, flay them, and carry away the skin and fat or tallow. Unless there is an available market within moderate distance, the carcass may perchance be left to be devoured by vultures or wild dogs. Beef is not beef in a trading sense, unless the owners know how to exchange it for money or goods; and the thinly-scattered population cannot possibly eat all the beef thus obtained. Out in the open Pampas, the ox, though not rendered so marketable as at Buenos Ayres for the beef, tallow, and horns,

suberves a greater number of uses to the hardy *Gauchos*. Roads or tracks are repaired with heads and horns of oxen and horses; the head serves for a stool, a chair, a pillow, just as the case may be; while the hide, cut up into strips, and dried either before or after being applied to useful purposes, eclipses every form of rope that can be obtained in those parts. In Chili, the cattle are not so numerous as in the wide-spreading Pampas; but the beef is said to be more quickly and effectually prepared for the market, on account of the remarkable dryness of the climate. Directly an ox or cow is killed, there the hide is stripped off with much dexterity; and then the fat and tallow are removed so completely as scarcely to leave a scrap behind. The muscles, which really constitute the lean, flesh, or meat of beef, are then cut away from the bone—not carelessly slashed off, but each muscle cut clean out, distinct from the neighbouring muscles, and without cutting across the grain of the meat. So systematically is this done, that the master-slaughterer can tell exactly how many muscles or flesh-pieces ought to be obtained from each animal.

Such, then, are the cattle from which we are now invited to eat beef at threepence a pound. The meat, so far as it has yet reached England, is neither raw nor cooked; it has undergone some preparation, sufficient to preserve it untainted for a considerable time. The modes of preparing it in this preliminary way are many; and experiments are in progress, in Chili and Buenos Ayres, to devise other modes likely to be acceptable to English buyers. Among the South Americans themselves, for their own eating, the prevailing form is that of *charqui*, at least in Chili. This word is said to be a corruption of *chair cuit* (cooked flesh), a designation applied to it by the Buccaneers of former ages; and from *charqui* or *charqui-beef* comes our *jerked beef*—a bit of etymology which the reader can accept if he likes. The *charqui* is made now nearly in the same way as Captain Basil Hall described it forty years ago. After the slaughtermen had cut out the pieces of flesh or muscle in the way already narrated, they proceeded thus: 'The men seated themselves on low stools, and began cutting each of the detached portions into long strips or ribbons, uniform in size [width] from end to end; some of them, cut from the larger pieces, being several yards in length by two inches in width. To perform this operation neatly requires considerable expertness. The piece of meat is held in the left hand, and at each slice is hitched round so as to offer a new place to the knife; and in this way it seems to unwind itself, like a broad tape from a ball, till at last nothing remains. We tried to perform this ourselves, but continually cut the strip across before it had attained any length. When the whole has been treated in this manner, it is allowed to hang under cover for a certain time, during which it acquires a black colour; and owing to the heat and dryness of the air, it speedily loses much of its moisture. The meat is afterwards exposed to the sun till thoroughly dried, and being then made up into great bales, strongly tied round with a net-work of thongs, becomes the *jerked beef* of commerce.' Here, then, we see clearly that the *charqui* of Chili is neither salted nor smoked; it consists simply of strips of lean beef, dried in the air and sunshine.

But the charqui of the La Plata provinces (Buenos Ayres, Monte Video, &c.) is different in its appearance and state. The climate of the Pampas is moderately moist; that of Chili is one of the driest on the face of the globe. Among the consequences of this is that the oxen of the Pampas are fatter and better grown than those of Chili; the beef is more succulent, and the moisture cannot be dried out so completely. The Pampas beef requires a little salting, to convert this remaining moisture into brine. The Gauchos hang out their strips of beef on lines to dry in the fresh air, as a laundress would hang out her clothes; and, like her, they hasten to take in the 'things' when a shower of rain comes on. In Chili, this is not necessary, for showers of rain are almost unknown there. The Pampas charqui is well dried in the sun after being salted, to avoid the stains which are the forerunners of decay in under-dried beef. Being, however, more succulent and less dried, the Pampas charqui is more prized in South America than the Chili; it is sent to Chili itself in large quantities, and sold at Valparaiso at the rate of about twopence-halfpenny per pound wholesale, after paying the expense of transit from the eastern to the western sides of the continent.

How it happens that this dried beef is just now talked about in England, may be explained as follows: During a long series of years, besides satisfying the home demand in the Buenos Ayrean, Monte Videan, and Chilian provinces, the cattle-farmers and beef-merchants have supplied the charqui largely to Brazil and the West Indies. But there has arisen gradually a very large demand in England and other European countries for leather, tallow, horns, and bones—leather for various manufacturing and clothing purposes, tallow for candles and soap, horns for chemical manufactures, and bones for manure. The enormous quantity of four million hides were exported from South America in 1863. Then the exporters had to ask themselves—What to do with the beef? If Europe can take more and more of the hides, fat, horns, hoofs, and bones, must we leave the beef to the vultures and wild dogs, or will Europe take that also? South America cannot eat all the beef from so many cattle; we must find another market. This is probably the true explanation of the fact that, about a year ago, certain merchants and commercial firms resolved to try what would be the fate of charqui in England. A little was done in Lancashire and Yorkshire, during 1864, to habituate the working-classes to this food; but only a little. The high price of English beef led to a notice of the matter in the newspapers early in the present year; and when the leading journal had such a startling heading to a letter as 'Beef at Threepence a Pound,' it is no wonder that Paterfamilias opened his eyes and ears. He knows, at anyrate, that good sirloin is at least thrice that price; and he naturally wants to know whether the South American beef can, even in ever so small a degree, come in aid of his larder and his pocket. Benevolent persons, too, are desirous of knowing whether the poor can get wholesome food at prices lower than those which now rule the market.

The interest taken in the matter has been so suddenly excited, that no definite plans have been yet developed; but it may be well to mention that various firms and companies are organising a

system of import, to be adopted as soon as the English people shall shew a willingness to buy the beef. Some of these firms are at Liverpool, some in London; some deal in the Chilian beef, some in that of the Pampas. We have seen two kinds, and will ask the reader to follow our brief description. One is in the form of rolls, seven or eight inches in diameter, evidently formed of thin layers of beef, rolled up tightly, like the 'rolly-polly' pudding of our boyish days; and the thickness of the layers of beef in the one does not differ much from that of the dough in the other. The meat is damp, neither wet nor dry; and it has been salted. It is, in fact, salt beef, without any bone, and with scarcely a particle of fat; but as the layers barely reach half an inch in thickness each, they do not look like our ordinary beef. The other kind that we have seen is a very queer-looking commodity indeed. It is like a large but irregularly-shaped pancake; or like a piece of oilcake from a linseed-oil mill; or like a piece of rough drab leather; or like a remnant of a very thick old blanket; or like a drab felt hat smashed out into hopeless ruin. It is, in fact, a layer of beef, varying from a quarter to half an inch in thickness, and shews signs of having been dipped in melted beef-fat before being dried, as if to compensate for the absence of the natural fat of the animal, which is all cut away by the slaughterers.

How to cook this beef is perhaps the most important question connected with the whole affair; for on this mainly depends the acceptance or rejection of the food by English persons. Of course, roasting, baking, frying, or boiling would be unsuitable for such meat; the moist kinds are too salt for this, and the dry kinds are too lean, chippy, and sapless. What the South Americans do with the beef when fresh, is another question. When Gerstäcker was travelling in South America in 1849, his guide, riding on horseback, took a slice of raw beef, and put it under his own person on the saddle, with an old untanned sheep-skin intervening; the sheep-skin shifted, and then the man sat literally on the beef. Of course, the German could not wholly approve this singular mode of rendering beef tender; but he philosophised on the readiness with which we may become reconciled to almost anything.

Mr Bridges Adams, speaking of his experience of charqui food when in Chili, says: 'My first acquaintance with this meat was on a journey, when for my sins I undertook to prepare supper, and so boiled the dried meat in an earthen vessel. My guide grinned askance, at what I knew not; but it soon came out; for, after boiling the meat for an hour, I thought it was done enough, and tried to eat it; but I found that I was of that special race of cooks said to be sent from below, for the meat was very like india-rubber in the chewing; so I turned it bodily over to my man Friday, and watched his process. First, he toasted the meat on the red embers of the wood-fire till it began to hiss; then he selected a large flat stone, on which he pounded the meat to shreds with another stone, and then restored it to the pipkin with a lump of dripping fat, dyed to a deep Indian red with ground capsicum. Then he sliced in some onions and hard-boiled eggs, added a portion of salt, with two or three small red pepper pods and boiled potatoes; and finally turned out a

stew for which Esau might have sold his birthright twice over.' For travelling, or for the consumption of travellers in Chili, he found that the charqui was packed, ready pounded, and mixed with a little butter or dripping, in lamb or sheep skins.

All agree that this South American beef must be used in the forms of stew, hash, soup, or broth, not as a joint; and some persons recommend it especially as a material for 'stock,' such as is usually made in England from gravy beef, and afterwards applied in a great variety of ways. The South American Beef Company (Cheapside) have just issued a card of instruction concerning the best modes of cooking their charqui. First, the meat is to be steeped in cold water for three hours, by which it swells out amazingly, shewing that there really is a large amount of solid flesh in the thin layers. If an Irish stew is to be made, the soaked meat is cut into small pieces about an inch square, slowly simmered for an hour and a half; then the potatoes, onions, and pepper are added in reasonable quantity, and the whole simmered slowly again till well done. Of course, the meaty flavour will depend on the proportion between the beef and the vegetables. If the dish is to be a beef and potato pie, the soaked meat is cut into small cubes, and simmered for an hour and a half; it is put into a pie-dish; potatoes, onions, and pepper are added; a dough-crust covers all; and then the oven is to do the rest. If we wish for minced beef, the soaked meat is cut into mince collops, simmered slowly, mixed up with mashed potatoes, and browned in the oven. If something in the haricot form is to be produced, the soaked meat is cut into pieces, simmered for an hour and a half, and then simmered again with carrot, turnip, or any other vegetables. If we want charqui soup, we have only to simmer the soaked beef with pease or any other vegetables at pleasure. A fitch or large slab of the beef is sometimes taken, rolled up into the form of a cylinder, spiced like spiced beef, cooked slowly, and allowed to cool in the water in which it has been boiled; it then forms a sort of ham, to be eaten cold. The Company say that a good housewife would soon find a multitude of other ways of cooking it; and this is doubtless true, if the meat should once find favour with the public.

This 'stock' is better known to well-ordered, well-to-do families than to the poor; they buy gravy beef, make a rich 'stock' or gravy from it, and use this as a basis for many kinds of soups, gravies, and sauces. Some persons think that charqui will benefit the working-classes directly, owing to the smallness of the price; but Mr Warriner seems to look rather for an indirect effect. He regards it as especially valuable for making 'stock.' Being all meat, at threepence per pound, while gravy beef, with an enormous amount of bone, being something like double the price, he considers that three times as much nutritious 'stock' is obtainable for a given sum of money in American beef as in English. If this be so, he argues, families in easy circumstances will use it; and gravy beef, lowering in price through the lessening of the demand, will become cheaper for the poor to buy. If, however, the analyses of chemists are to be relied upon, the benefit ought to be greater than this. Not only is there an entire absence of bone, but the meat, having had the moisture nearly dried out of it, contains far more nitrogenous or flesh-making food than an

equal weight of fresh English beef. Professor Galloway, of the Irish Museum of Industry, has proved this; and testimony of a similar kind has been furnished by other chemists.

One precaution is essentially necessary. The poor, and the poorer among the working-classes, must not be allowed to imbibe the opinion, that this cheap beef is to be palmed off upon them *because* it is cheap, and because they are poor. This would frustrate the whole enterprise. English people are very sensitive on this point; they will quietly buy cheap food at their own time and in their own way, according as it is to be had; but they must not be coaxed into eating threepenny beef, as if it were a benevolent suggestion. Work-houses, asylums, and soup-kitchens are not the places where the system should first be tried. Many a middle-class family, striving to maintain a good appearance on a scanty income, would do well to take up this subject, and give it a fair trial in various ways; if they find it to answer, a trade would soon spring up, and imitation would carry the system into other quarters. The flat unrolled pieces of charqui have not a pleasant appearance to eyes accustomed to the rich ruddy colour of English fresh beef; and it would be a pity if prejudice should hence arise before the merits of the meat have been fairly tested. The moister-rolled specimen, having more the appearance of salt beef, will have fewer prejudices to encounter. There will be quite trouble enough, without any other obstacles, in inducing the wives of working-men to cook it properly; they are seldom good cooks, and the charqui essentially requires good cookery.

Retail dealers are waiting to see whether a trade can be fostered in this article of food. We have seen the hand-bill of one shopkeeper, announcing his South American beef at fourpence a pound (the wholesale price is twenty-eight shillings per cwt. of a hundred and twelve pounds). If some large establishment—not for charity, but for experiment—would investigate the whole affair, and publish the results (unfavourable as well as favourable) in the newspapers, it would do more good than to leave humble families to begin it, because such families really cannot do justice to the subject, until they have received a few clear hints from those who are in a better position to grapple with its difficulties.

BROADCAST THY SEED.

BROADCAST thy seed!

Although some portion may be found
To fall on uncongenial ground,
Where sand, or shard, or stone may stay
Its coming into light of day;
Or when it comes, some pestilent air
May make it droop and wither there—
Be not discouraged; some will find
Congenial soil, and gentle wind,
Refreshing dew, and ripening shower,
To bring it into beauteous flower,
From flower to fruit, to glad thine eyes,
And fill thy soul with sweet surprise.
Do good, and God will bless thy deed—
Broadcast thy seed!

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